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MUNICIPAL EXPERT POINTS OUT HIS REMEDIES FOR ILLS OF GOVERNMENT IN HAWAII TODAY

H. Gooding Field Makes Address Before Hilo Civic Convention

[This address by H. Gooding Field, the municipal expert, was read at the Hilo civic convention Thursday. It is reproduced below in full.]

In my recent investigations of the affairs of the County governments of Oahu and Hawaii, it was found that much, if not all of the present failure of administration was attributable to three causes, namely:

1. The inadequacy of the present County Acts to meet conditions;
2. The fewness of the people who pay direct taxes, compared with the total number of voters, resulting in;
3. The predominating influence of politics in the selection of incumbents to public office.

The actual defects in the management of our County governments, which have either a direct or an indirect bearing on the foregoing conditions, are two-fold in character, and relate to:

1. The administrative functions of local government; and
 2. The administration and control of County finances.
- These defects are as follows:—
Under the head of Administration:
1. Lack of efficiency in administrative methods;
 2. Absence of constructive plan and definiteness of outlays for public improvements; and
 3. Lack of organization and capacity for dealing with community problems.

In matters of Finance:

1. Lack of an Accounting system which gives the accurate facts of government;
2. Absence of reliable information which shows the rights, franchise and property of the Counties; and
3. The unreliability and deficiency of Reports submitted by County Auditors of the financial status of the Counties.

It is my earnest opinion that before we can attempt to obtain more lasting and better results in the administration of our County affairs, we must confine our elective offices to those whose incumbents are directly responsible for the policies of local government, otherwise no truly responsive government can be expected. In this the present County Act fails, in that it provides for a multiplicity of elective offices, resulting in much friction, lack of co-ordination and absence of complete responsibility on the part of our public officials. I would strongly advocate, therefore, a short ballot, confining the elective offices of each County to the Supervisors and the Auditor.

The Supervisors should appoint the official service of the County and be held responsible to the taxpayers for the administration of County affairs. By including the Auditor in the number of elective officers, it would ensure to that official a strictly independent position, which the nature of his duties demands. Heads of Departments, who should be appointed by the Board of Supervisors, should, in turn, not only have the selection of their subordinates, but in the conduct of their departments, they should be held directly responsible to the Board of Supervisors.

Urges Non-Partisan Election.
Politics should be entirely eliminated from our local administrative campaigns. A non-partisan County Elections Act could well be passed to provide for the election of our County officers without the use of National party emblems or names, thereby permitting the Counties to more nearly determine elections on County issues. Unfortunately for this Territory, instead of detailed attention being given in the past to keep the public, through its representatives, informed as to the progress, the merits, the needs and the faults of the business of County government, our responsible electorate have, given to the politics of County government. To ensure a betterment in our local affairs, much educational work is needed on concrete administrative problems, budgets, etc., which in recent years have resulted elsewhere in continuous developments. What we need to perfect our system of local government is an aroused public conscience. We must crave business management rather than political fireworks. We must make the men we choose for public office declare "We will deliver the goods," and after they are chosen we must insist, with an open public eye, that the goods are delivered, otherwise the efficacious remedy "the recall" should promptly be put into operation.

The County Act should be amended, furthermore, to provide for a complete segregation of purely local and Territorial functions. At present there is much confusion and uncertainty, together with a needless expenditure of public funds in enforcing this dual legislation. I refer more particularly to matters affecting the Territorial Department of Public Works and the local Engineering Departments. Such amendments to the Incorporating Act should be made with the view to a centralization of authority so that the maximum of results can be obtained in both branches of the government from the minimum of expenditures. The County Act should be thoroughly re-modelled, on the lines of the most progressive communities on the mainland of similar size to our own, but with due regard to the economic and other conditions which are peculiar to the Territory.

Changes Outlined.
I believe the time is now opportune for introducing provisions in the County Law which would embody the principles of the Initiative, Referendum and Recall. It would be impossible, at this time, to outline more than a summary of the fundamental principles which should govern this class of



H. GOODING FIELD.
—Photo By Perkins

local legislation. The following, however, cover the salient points which have been usually adopted on the mainland, and may well be considered by our lawmakers.

The Initiative.
If a certain percentage of voters wish a certain measure adopted they can submit it to the Board of Supervisors, which must, in turn, submit it to a referendum.

The Referendum.
If a certain number of voters demand an opportunity to vote upon a measure, the Board of Supervisors must submit it to them, and the people decide by vote whether it shall or shall not become law. The Referendum can be demanded not only on measures previously proposed by the Initiative but upon measures which have their origin with the Board of Supervisors itself.

The Recall.
If a certain percentage of voters demand the right to decide whether a public official shall continue to hold office or must retire to private life, the question must be submitted to the people at an election. If they vote against him he must give up his office, whether the term for which he was elected is anywhere near its end or its beginning. The Recall provision should be accompanied by definite charges of incompetency or corrupt practice, and signed by not less than 25 per cent of the total voters in the County.

At the regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors, I would advocate giving the heads of County departments the right to a seat at such meetings, but not the right to vote. It is my opinion that such a procedure would greatly facilitate public business and keep the executive branch of our local governments in closer touch with County legislation.

The political conditions existing in these Islands are such that they must be seriously considered in line with any remedial legislation or substantial reforms which can be expected in connection with our County governments. Unless we can eliminate, root and branch, the long exploded notion that civic government is a political institution and substitute in its stead the principle that the united and best energies of every taxpayer are demanded to build up the public machine, we can not expect any radical change in the present mismanagement of our local affairs.

The growing demand on the mainland for direct primary laws, by which all candidates for office are nominated by direct voting rather than through the caucus or convention, might well be extended to our local elections. Whatever the advantages, theoretical or practical, of the convention system, its doom is clearly written. The limitation of the voter to the choice of one leading candidate, the manipulation of representatives chosen, the opportunities for trading and jobbery, the undeliberative character of the convention, all have combined to make the system, as now known and practiced, intensely unpopular and incapable of long duration. We cannot, by any possibility, successfully operate a party which is organized on National and State lines, and fit that party to a municipal election. It never has been done, and it never will be done. The lines of cleavage of the different parties are different. The lines upon which they are agreed in National and State elections are not the lines governing the municipal election. That we should have a Primary Election law for counties, in my opinion, cannot be denied, and such a law should leave the counties the right to choose either the direct nominating system or nomination by petition; if the latter plan is adopted, then it might be well to provide for a preliminary election for the purpose of choosing two candidates for each office.

I would also suggest the passage of a Statute by the Legislature strictly defining corrupt practice in regard to Territorial and county officials, making the same a penal offense; also prohibiting officials from selling to or contracting with the Territory or county directly or indirectly. In regard to county sales and purchases, the law should state that the same be made upon motion of the entire Board of Supervisors, and also prohibiting the loaning or hire of county machinery, material, etc., to contractors or other persons.

In order, therefore, to furnish an absolute check on our public book-keeping, and to secure adequate publicity for taxation, appropriations and expenditure, a law should be passed by the next Legislature authorizing the establishment of a Territorial Bureau of Audits and Municipal Sta-

Urges Changes in Election Laws and Adoption of the Direct Primary

Under the present conditions, the members of which to be appointed by the Governor. If we are to profit by the experience of mainland communities, we must strengthen and consolidate all our local civic bodies into representative county organizations, with each affiliated body as a committee, working out its special community problem. Such consolidation of interest could not only be a progressive step but would materially add to the activity and interest already exercised by our local organizations in their attempt to better the community situation. The plan of consolidation which was recently discussed by representatives of the Honolulu civic bodies has not by any means been abandoned. The various schemes under which the civic organizations of a number of progressive mainland cities are now operating have been carefully studied and analyzed, and at an early date, action will be taken to present a suitable working plan to meet the local requirements.

The sphere of usefulness of such a Territorial Bureau of Audits might be extended to the examination of balance sheets of the Territorial Public Service, quasi-public and industrial corporations. Such statements are now filed with the Territorial Treasurer for purposes of taxation, but no systematic check is made to verify the figures submitted in the respective capital accounts.

The appointment of a public utilities commission for the Territory, whilst it might not altogether be considered in the light of a reform, would, at least, assist in clearing the local atmosphere of much uncertainty and differences of opinion on many perplexing questions.

In conclusion, I cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that the greatest of all reforms for the betterment of civic conditions is an awakened public conscience. The time has long since passed when a citizen's usefulness to his government ends with the ballot. His duty to his family compels him to insist that the community life be above reproach. Not only our civic bodies, therefore, but our own families for the discussion of public affairs, and their members are actuated by the one single purpose of raising the standard of civic excellence to the highest possible point, can we expect any material change in our present local conditions.

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